

Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

1987

Press Releases

1987

1987 - Defensive Backs

University Marketing and Communications

Follow this and additional works at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_1987

Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "1987 - Defensive Backs" (1987). 1987. 505.
https://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_1987/505

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Press Releases at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in 1987 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.



Panther Sports News

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY - Charleston, IL 61920
217/581-5981

LS-AS

DEFENSIVE BACKS (Fourth in a Series)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL.--For the past eight years JOHN SMITH has been constructing nationally ranked defenses at Northeast Missouri and Western Illinois.

Looking for a new challenge, SMITH found just that as Eastern Illinois University's defensive coordinator. He inherits just three fulltime starters on defense.

SMITH also coaches the defensive secondary which was the most porous vs. the pass in the Gateway Conference last year.

After viewing the prospects during the spring, how does he approach the '87 season? "It's hard to say how good we'll be. The players are coachable and good to work with so those important ingredients are there," SMITH says. "And I guarantee they'll play their rear ends off!"

Speaking specifically of the secondary, he believes "we can be pretty good .. .if we stay healthy. That's the thing that scares me because in the spring we only had some of the guys practice. Scott Johnson was the only one who made it all the way through spring."

JOHNSON (NEWTON), just a junior, will probably be a fulltime starter at one safety position. He was used primarily in passing down situations last season.

"Scott had a good spring. He's a heady player, good range, good height but needs work in man-to-man coverages."

KEVIN HUNTER (DETROIT-KING) is a two year letterman who figures to nail down a starting safety position, also, after playing in a backup role for two years.

more

page 2

"Kevin had a bad foot and was gimpy most of the spring but he showed enough to indicate he has good range and is smart. He's like Scott . . . as he works on man-to-man, he will become a better defensive player," says SMITH.

R.L. REYNOLDS (DETROIT-KING) is the lone fulltime starter returning to the secondary. Slated for left corner, R.L. was a second team All-Gateway pick as he tied for league high and was ninth in the nation with seven pass interceptions as a redshirt freshman.

"He has great potential and good quickness without the great speed but needs to lock in more on the mental approach to the game," says SMITH.

The player with the least experience won a starting spot based, pure and simple, on his performance during the spring. DARYL HOLCOMBE (FORT LAUDERDALE, FL-NOVA) "had the best spring of any secondary player. He has good quickness, is a tough competitor and very smart but, as with the rest of the group, the key to his success will be staying healthy."

HOLCOMBE played just briefly in '86 getting 13 tackles as a redshirt freshman so is virtually a rookie this fall.

RICK LABIAK (JOLIET-PROVIDENCE) was chosen the Most Improved Defensive Back in the Spring. Consequently he's listed as the No. 1 backup on the depth charts.

He's a redshirt freshman who "needs more work on his confidence and quickness but he learns quickly," says SMITH. LABIAK came to EIU as a running back but was switched to defense last fall.

The remainder of the backups will have to emerge this fall from other redshirt and first year freshmen. "We have some players with a lot of ability but little or no experience at this level so we're going to need every minute these next few weeks to get them ready," SMITH said.